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# Abbas tied to history of crimes

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Mohammed Abbas, the shadowy suspected mastermind behind the hijacking of the cruise ship Achille Lauro, has figured in both the most ludicrous and the most nightmarish acts of terror ever perpetrated in the Middle East.

According to Israeli officials, he has sent terrorists on quixotic raids against Israel in hang-gliders and a hot-air balloon. But he also is believed to have planned a 1979 raid on Nahariya in which terrorists beat a man and his 5-year-old daughter to death—as a terrified Israeli mother, hiding in a closet, accidentally smothered her infant baby to keep her from crying out.

The tall, mustached Abbas is also blamed by some Lebanese for the destruction of downtown Beirut as he fought Christian Phalange forces during the civil war that broke out in 1975.

A loyalist of PLO leader Yasser Arafat, Abbas provides the clearest evidence that Arafat has not, as some Arab leaders insist, renounced terrorism in hope of winning a political solution to the Palestinian problem.

U.S. intelligence sources say his real name is Mohammed Zeydan, and that he was born in the Safred region of then-Palestine about 1940. Israel says he was born in Syria into an Arab family from Haifa. His whole life has been spent in the Palestinian movement—in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, U.S. sources said.

He first came to prominence as a spokesman for Ahmed Jebril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, one of the "rejectionist" Palestinian splinter groups that would have no part of a negotiated settlement with Israel on any terms.

In 1977, he split with Jebril, a former captain in the Syrian Army, objecting to Syrian influence in the movement. That year, the Palestine National Council extended formal recognition to Abbas' group, the Palestine Liberation Front.

The Israeli rap sheet on him is long:

On April 22, 1979, four PLF terrorists hit Nahariya, killing four persons, including the child smothered by accident.

Aug. 18, 1979: A boat carrying four terrorists was captured by the Israelis off Nahariya.

In March, 1981, a man in a hang-glider tried to fly into Israel from southern Lebanon. Israeli forces arrested two men.

On April 28, 1981, Israel shot down a hot-air balloon carrying two Arab infiltrators and killed both of them.

In 1982 Abbas' PLF claimed responsibility for the murder of the police chief of Ramala, in Israel.

In 1984 four PLF members were captured on the Golan Heights, and accused of attempting to kidnap Israelis to exchange for Palestinian prisoners.

Abbas fled to Tunis with Arafat after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and sided with Arafat after a 1983 split in the PLO. Last year, he became a member of the 14-man PLO Executive Committee. He is also a member of the Palestine National Council.

According to Israel, at a session of the PLO executive committee in Tunis Sept. 5-11, Abbas called for an escalation of "armed struggle" against Israel. His group is "a splinter of a splinter," according to one U.S. official, and has a tiny budget.

"Until now, he has really been a bit player," one official said.